

Holiday Eating Tips

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Just think! Before we know it, we shall celebrate some or all of these holidays: Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanza, New Year's Day, to name a few. With each of these festive occasions comes eating, and in some cases, to our health's detriment, because many of the dishes are rich in fats, sodium, sugar and/or alcohol. Of course, the purpose of the holidays and their foods is to eat and enjoy something special, particularly if they are not offered often.

So, how can we eat and enjoy such foods and remain somewhat diligent to our healthy food plan? Listed below are some ideas that will help you stay on track and within your target range:

1. Eat whole foods, such as whole grain breads and cereals, legumes (dried beans, peas and lentils), fresh/frozen vegetables and fruits, whenever possible. These foods will help you avoid constipation and keep your blood sugars constant. If you want canned vegetables, get un-salted or low-salt products; or, if none are available, rinse the regular canned vegetables in running water thoroughly, to remove the salt.
2. Eat less meats, poultry, milk and dairy products, unless they are low- or non-fat.
3. Know your serving sizes, especially if you have diabetes, to keep your blood sugars normal. Generally speaking, think **small**, most especially during the holidays, because many dishes tend to be overloaded with rich ingredients. Breads, biscuits and cornbread, one slice; rice and pasta dishes 1/3-1/2 cup, maximum; non-starchy vegetables, one cup; fresh/frozen fruits, 1/2 cup. If you have canned fruit, please make sure the fruit is in its natural juice, without added sugar of any kind.
4. Drink water to bulk food mass and flush your system; dilute urine, prevent kidney stones, dissolve medications, minerals and other food items; lubricate bones, skin, eyes, hair, nails, muscles; among many other functions. Yes, we need water, so drink it.
5. Desserts: Enjoy them once in a while. Again, think small. In fact, consider sharing your portion with someone else to help ensure you stay on track.
6. Alcohol: Women can nurse one drink per day; and men, two. That is it, folks! We want you to stay healthy and fit.
7. Physical movement is vital everyday and the holidays are no exception. Please walk, dance, and run or do some form of physical movement during this season. You will feel better and keep your weight and blood sugars in line too.
8. Avoid foods high in calories, especially deep-or double-fried foods; sugared or highly sauced foods; sodas; highly refined convenience and fast foods--you know the deal. Why? Because these types of foods tend to be low in fiber and can jam up human plumbing, not to mention wreak havoc with blood sugars, sending them sky high.

During this time of year and on any special occasion, offer to bring a dish you enjoy and know others will like that is healthy--preferably one you make. That way, you keep control of the ingredients that go in the dish and the amounts. Your family and friends will love you for daring to be different and taking the time to make a difference in everyone's health, rather than yours alone. Now, how proud of you of your efforts?

To all of you, have a joyous and blessed holiday season. Happy eating!

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